

HOLIFIELD BACK IN FINE STYLE

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 0, Oxford United XI 0

ALTHOUGH there was again an obvious weakness up front, Wycombe Wanderers showed some encouraging signs in their final pre-season warm-up game against Oxford United's Combination XI at Loakes Park on Wednesday night.

Best news of all for Wycombe is the return of Mick Holifield, whose strength, pace and skill made the world of difference to midfield. He was well supported by Graham Mackenzie, who had a fine first half.

Wednesday's game was somewhat marred, however, by two injuries. Keith Mead suffered a bad knock on a leg which may well keep him out for tomorrow's (Saturday) game while Tony Horseman was injured in a clash of heads.

On a ground in remarkable condition considering the previous day's rain, Wanderers dominated the first half with some fine football. Their passing and teamwork on a greasy surface was excellent and Mackenzie, Holifield, Horseman and Howard Kennedy all went close to opening the account only to be defied by experienced goalkeeper John Milkins.

One cannot escape the fact, though, that this Wanderers attack is too weak. Horseman still has much to offer at the age of 36 but Dylan Evans had one of his 'off' nights. It was

promising to see Steve Pratt back again from Waddesdon — he played a couple of pre-season games last term — but the tall Waddesdon striker had little time to show his skills.

If Wycombe had the better of the first half, Oxford certainly dominated the second. United's Combination team has an average age of just 17 and many of these youngsters showed tremendous potential.

Paul Berry drove over the top early on and then Archie White clipped the top of the crossbar with another effort.

Pratt had a chance at the other end but mistimed his shot and in the 73rd minute Berry's effort was deflected by a Wycombe boot onto an upright.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell (sub P. Spittle 45 mins); P. Birdseye, K. Mead (sub W. Roberts 80 mins); A. Phillips, R. Davies, H. Kennedy (sub S. Pratt 62 mins), J. Priestley, G. Mackenzie, M. Holifield, A. Horseman (sub G. Brown 79 mins), D. Evans.

OXFORD: J. Milkins; J. Doyle, A. Kingston, I. Stock, G. Watson; P. Berry, M. McIntosh, A. McNab; P. Emsden, A. White, J. Sweetzer. Subs J. Pratt, C. Daly (not used).

Referee: C. Downey (Isleworth).

BLUES 4-4-2?

WYCOMBE Wanderers, still struggling to find new forwards, kick off the season in the Isthmian League Premier Division tomorrow (Saturday) with a difficult visit to Croydon.

With Ian Pearson now at Millwall and Howard Kettleborough at Bedford, the Blues have yet to announce forwards to replace them. This means that much will rest on the shoulders of Dylan Evans and the veteran Tony Horseman, now in his 16th season with the club. Manager John Reardon may play a 4-4-2 formation or alternatively push a midfield player up front.

Croydon, who beat Wycombe 1-0 in the corresponding game last season, have kept much the same squad. The only newcomers are forwards Charlie Pooley and Alec Jackson from Dulwich Hamlet.